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COASTAL AREA

RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

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March, 1978

STATE DOCUMENTS

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

INTRODUCTION

The runaway problem in our juvenile population had reached crisis proportions by the early 1970's when it became a focus of national attention. According to statistics in the Uniform Crime Reports for the United States, 1976, runaway arrests increased 23.4% between 1967 and 1976, although the increase between 1972 and 1976 was only 1.7% and a decrease of 8.8% was recorded between 1975 and 1976. Hopefully, the national figures for 1977 will confirm the beginning of a downward trend. UCR figures on runaway arrests in South Carolina indicated a dramatic decline between 1975 and 1977. Police arrested 1,737 runaways in 1975, 1,259 in 1976, and 888 in 1977, a decrease of 48.9% during the two year period.

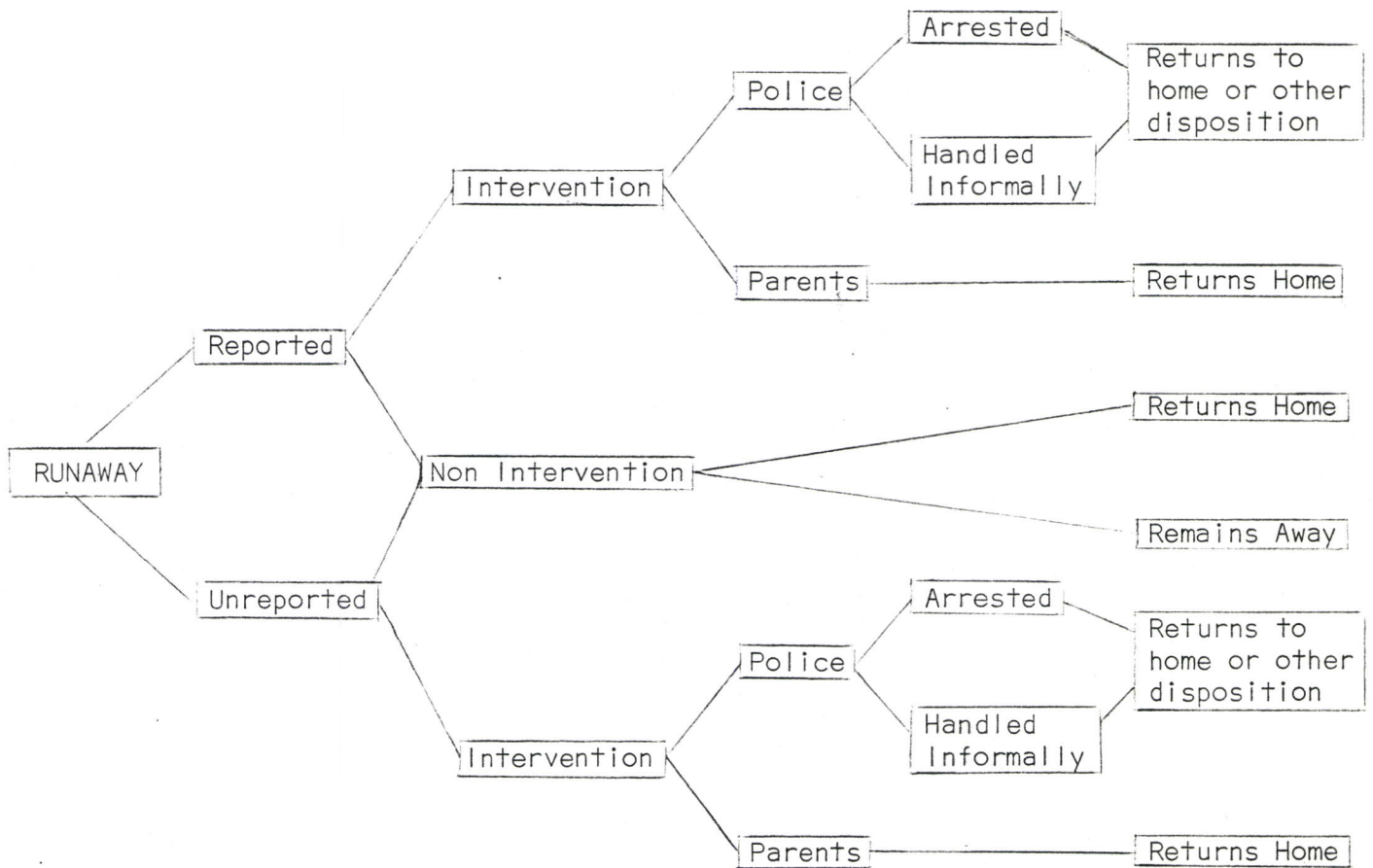
The recent UCR statistics may seem to provide a basis for optimism that the runaway problem is diminishing. However, it is difficult to generalize from arrest data to the overall incidence of runaway behavior among American youth. Arrests terminate only a fraction of runaway episodes. Police also handle runaways informally, parents occasionally locate children themselves, and many runaway cases are resolved when youths come home through their own initiative.

Figure 1 depicts the alternative patterns which can develop when a child runs. The key variables are "reported" versus "unreported" and "intervention"

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Figure 1

TRACKING THE RUNAWAY



versus "non-intervention." When parents report runaways, and/or when police intervene in a case, then some record of the episode may be available to researchers attempting to analyze the scope of the runaway problem. However, given the probable number of unreported runaways, it is clear that sources other than law enforcement records must be utilized to provide an accurate index of runaway behavior in our juvenile population.

Certain segments of the juvenile population have contributed more heavily to the runaway problem. The national UCR statistics for 1976 indicated that an overwhelming 87.6% of runaways arrested were white. The majority, 56.9%, were female and the modal age grouping was 13-14, incorporating some 31% of the total.

Running away is not a crime but rather a delinquency offense unique to juveniles. The runaway, a status offender, is likely to be a low priority problem for the law enforcement community which must concentrate its energies on criminal investigations. An indication of police involvement in runaway episodes was given by Tim Brennan et al.¹ in a 1975 study of runaway behavior conducted for HEW. Two-thirds of the youths questioned reported no contact with law enforcement personnel during their runaway episodes. Nevertheless, it will be suggested in the report which follows that police devote considerable time not only to apprehensions and dispositions of runaways but also to taking reports from concerned parents which may or may not lead to first hand contacts with the wayward children. When Brennan et al. questioned parents

¹Tim Brennan et al. First Report: The Incidence and Nature of Runaway Behavior. Boulder, Colorado: Behavioral and Evaluation Corporation, 1975.

whose children had runaway episodes they found that about 40% called the police; the younger the child, the more likely a report to authorities.

A certain number of "myths" regarding runaway episodes have been perpetuated in the news media, perhaps because the "interesting" runaway is one who managed to live away from home for several months while in transit from coast-to-coast or down the Atlantic seaboard. However, the Brennan report provided the following more typical profile of runaway episodes: Most runaways in the sampling were gone only overnight, one-half returned in three days, two-thirds in one week. The majority traveled less than ten miles from home, primarily staying with friends.

Myths, or at best unconfirmed theories, abound in the explanation of runaway behavior. Many cite conflict at home as the primary catalyst. A "running from" - "running to" model also has been suggested, the latter category characterized by restlessness, desire for exploration and freedom from parental restrictions, and pleasure seeking in subcultures having different values than those reflected in the home.

Brennan and his associates devoted a substantial part of their research to the isolation of personality attributes and variables in family, school, and peer group contexts correlating highly with runaway behavior. Youths in the runaway samples exhibited a wide array of personality and environmental characteristics suggesting the inadequacy of simplistic theories which focus on single causal agents to explain runaway behavior. Statistical evidence supported a model distinguishing low and high delinquency runners.

Low delinquency runners included three types. Two types were characterized by good family situations, although parents tended to allow these youth considerable freedom. Poor school attitudes were reflected in only one type. The

low delinquency runners were typically lower or middle class youth who exhibited average to high self-esteem, and social alienation was not pronounced within this group.

In contrast, high delinquency runners uniformly had low levels of self-esteem and high levels of social alienation. Social class ranged from low to high. This group, which consisted of four types, was generally characterized by stressful family and school situations entailing mutual dissatisfaction/rejection. High delinquency runaways also exhibited strong commitments to peers and experienced peer pressure toward delinquent behavior.

Brennan's research utilized sophisticated statistical techniques to isolate variables associated with runaway behavior, allowing development of a typology which presumably will be retested in subsequent studies. The complexity of this typology challenges common overgeneralizations which associate runaway behavior with unyielding parents and more generally with an inflexible society firmly grounded in the middle class value system. A full range of social classes, diversified home situations, and varying degrees of social alienation within the Brennan model support a broader interpretation of runaway behavior.

Brennan's research for HEW commenced in July, 1974, and reflected a growing concern at the national level with the runaway crisis. This concern culminated in passage of the Runaway Youth Act which President Ford signed on September 7, 1974. James A. Hart and Raymond L. Manella, writing in Juvenile Justice,² stated that Congress was motivated to take legislative action for

²James A. Hart and Raymond L. Manella. "The Runaway Youth Act," Juvenile Justice, Vol. 26 No. 4, November, 1975, pp. 3-6.

several reasons including: 1) The great increase in number of children who leave home and stay away without parental permission; 2) Poor statistical definition of the problem at the national level; 3) The "interstate" nature of the problem; and 4) The already overburdened local law enforcement agencies which should not have to assume responsibility for locating/detaining/returning runaways. The Runaway Youth Act authorized HEW to allocate funds and provide technical assistance to local communities and non-profit agencies for operation of shelters to accomodate the immediate needs of runaways outside of law enforcement and the juvenile justice system.

Anticipating this interest in the development of local programs to meet the special needs of runaways, the South Carolina Department of Youth Services, through its Research and Planning Division, surveyed four geographic regions in the state to determine the extent of the runaway problem during 1973. It was found that runaways were more concentrated in the coastal area. Law enforcement and court agencies in Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, and Horry counties had apprehended some 1,178 runaway youth, largely during the summer months. Most were white females, usually 15-16 years of age. The coastal area survey helped to justify establishment of the Charleston Runaway House, which opened late in 1975.

Some four years have passed since the original coastal survey was completed. The Research and Evaluation Unit has been asked to assist in improving and expanding the Runaway House program by providing updated information on the runaway problem in the coastal region. The study which follows is in response to that request. It is similar to the original, but focuses on a slightly different region, omitting Beaufort County and the Myrtle Beach resort area but adding Dorchester County. Certain new variables have been included to

improve analysis of detention and dispositions. The next section is devoted to a complete discussion of methodology.

METHODOLOGY

The current study is an analysis of runaways apprehended by law enforcement personnel in Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties during 1977. Variables to be examined include age; race and sex of runaways; residence--South Carolina or out-of-state; month apprehended; length of detention, where applicable; and dispositions--Family/Probate Court, Runaway House, other social agency, returned to parents, or unknown. Only law enforcement data has been utilized in the analyzation of these variables because of the probability that court records would duplicate individual cases. A brief accounting of admissions to the Charleston Runaway House has also been included, based on figures provided by the Department of Youth Services' Youth Bureau Office. Collection of data from the law enforcement agencies proceeded as follows.

Each city and county law enforcement agency in the area and the district headquarters for the South Carolina Highway Patrol received an introductory letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting the agency's cooperation in supplying raw data. This mailing included a simple one page form for the convenience of personnel compiling the information. A copy of the form appears in the Appendix of this report. Follow-up telephone calls about ten days later indicated favorable responses in most cases and few questions concerning the information requested. Of the twenty-one law enforcement agencies contacted by mail, eighteen were successfully reached by phone at least once during the data collection period. Reports obtained from fourteen agencies by the deadline form the data base for the study.

The majority of non-reporting agencies serve small towns, "off the beaten track" so to speak, and are unlikely to produce significant numbers of runaway apprehensions. Isle of Palms Police Department, which serves a small beach resort area in Charleston County, is an unfortunate exception. Isle of Palms reported 32 runaways in the 1973 study. Despite repeated efforts to contact this agency, the researchers were unable to obtain figures for 1977.

Most of the cooperating agencies provided all information requested. Exceptions included Mount Pleasant Police Department in Charleston County and Moncks Corner Police Department in Berkeley County, which did not report length of detention, and Charleston City Police Department, which could not provide data on runaway apprehensions per se. The Charleston City report duplicated the UCR format of "number reported," "number arrested," "number of cleared cases," and, therefore, was of little utility for the purposes of this study.

On the other hand, Charleston County Police Department submitted not only complete data on runaway apprehensions but also information on some 108 youth reported missing who returned on their own, including length of time away from home. Although this type of runaway and the length of time variable exceed the original scope of the study, a brief analysis of the data has been included as a matter of general interest.

In the sections which follow, simple descriptive statistics presented with tables and graphs facilitate data interpretation. Age, race and sex, distribution of runaways, residence, and month of apprehension are examined by county and area. Total apprehensions, length of detention, and dispositions, variables expected to exhibit divergent patterns even among law enforcement facilities in the same county, are analyzed by facility as well. The study concludes with a

summarization and a brief comparison of the 1977 data to the original coastal area survey cited in the introduction.

ANALYZATION

Total Runaway Apprehensions: The Scope of the Problem

Table I indicates the total number of runaway apprehensions by reporting facility, county, and area. The South Carolina Highway Patrol figures, reflecting the entire tri-county area, are treated separately but included in the area total.

Nearly 500 runaways were picked up by law enforcement personnel in the tri-county area during 1977. Facility totals range from 0, reported by Sullivan's Island Police Department in Charleston County and Saint George Police Department in Dorchester County, to 91 apprehensions by the North Charleston Police Department.

Charleston County, as expected, contributed the greatest number of runaway apprehensions, 216 or 44.5% of the area total, followed by Berkeley County with 36.2%, Dorchester County with 17.7%, and South Carolina Highway Patrol with 1.6%. Apprehensions in Berkeley County were concentrated in the Hanahan and Goose Creek Police Departments, which account for 79.6% of the county total. North Charleston and the County Police Department contributed some 81% of the Charleston County runaway cases. In Dorchester County the Sheriff's Office picked up 68 youth, 90.7% of the county total.

It should be noted that Charleston County is slightly underrepresented because of the nature of the data received from the City Police Department,

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TABLE I

TOTAL RUNAWAYS APPREHENDED
BY FACILITY, COUNTY AND AREA

COUNTY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY TOTAL	PERCENTAGE OF AREA TOTAL
<u>BERKELEY</u>			
Berkeley County			
Sheriff's Office	23	13.1	4.7
Moncks Corner			
Police Dept.	13	7.4	2.7
Goose Creek			
Police Dept.	83	47.2	17.1
Hanahan Police			
Department	57	32.4	11.7
St. Stephens			
Police Dept.	0	0	0
TOTAL	176	100.0	36.2
<u>CHARLESTON</u>			
Charleston County			
Police Dept.	84	38.9	17.3
Charleston City			
Police Dept.	15*	6.9	3.1
North Charleston			
Police Dept.	91	42.1	18.7
Sullivan's Island			
Police Dept.	0	0	0
Folly Beach			
Police Dept.	16	7.4	3.3
Mt. Pleasant			
Police Dept.	10	4.6	2.1
TOTAL	216	100.0	44.5
<u>DORCHESTER</u>			
Dorchester County			
Sheriff's Office	78	90.7	16.1
St. George Police			
Department	0	0	0
Summerville Police			
Department	8	9.3	1.6
TOTAL	86	100.0	17.7
<u>SOUTH CAROLINA</u>			
<u>HIGHWAY PATROL</u>			
(Tri County Area)	8		1.6
AREA TOTAL	486		100.0

*number arrested; number apprehended not available

and the lack of data from Isle of Palms. The 15 runaways indicated for Charleston City reflect arrests. The actual number apprehended should fall somewhere between 15 and the 63 "cleared cases" listed in the raw data. The "cleared cases" figure was not used because it included runaways reported missing who returned home without police intervention. It is likely that Isle of Palms Police Department apprehended between 20 and 30 children, based on the 32 runaways reported for the 1973 survey. Therefore, Charleston County apprehensions, given more complete data, would probably approximate 250, and the coastal area total would then exceed 500.

Age, Race and Sex Distribution of Runaways Apprehended

Table II presents the age, race and sex distribution of runaways apprehended in the coastal area during 1977, broken down by county and Highway Patrol district only. Children under age 13 represent just 7.9% of the area total. A modal age of 14 for the entire area holds up when each county is analyzed individually and also conforms to the national UCR data cited in the introduction. The average age, area-wide, computed on 469 youths is 14.3 years.

The overall age pattern reflects a sharp increase in runaway behavior at age 13, continuing and peaking at age 14, then declining slightly and stabilizing at ages 15 and 16. The 15-16 age grouping contains the greatest percentage of runaways apprehended in the coastal area, some 46.5% of the total as opposed to 42.2% for the 13-14 age bracket. However, there is some variation when age categories are analyzed by county. In Berkeley County the dominant age grouping is 13-14, accounting for some 46.6% of the total. Generally, Charleston County corresponds to the area pattern. In Dorchester County, the 15-16 year olds included well over half of the runaways, 56.9%.

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TABLE II

AGE, RACE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION
OF RUNAWAYS

COUNTY	AGE																RACE												TOTAL
	10& UND	%	11	%	12	%	13	%	14	%	15	%	16	%	UNK	%	W/M	%	W/F	%	B/M	%	B/F	%	UNK	%			
BERKELEY	5	2.8	4	2.3	6	3.4	28	15.9	54	30.7	32	18.2	45	25.6	2	1.1	40	22.7	132	75.0	2	1.1	2	1.1			176		
CHARLESTON	6	2.8	6	2.8	8	3.7	32	14.8	54	25.0	49	22.7	46	21.3	15	6.9	52	24.1	124	57.4	8	3.7	17	7.8	15	6.9	216		
DORCHESTER					3	3.5	3	3.5	31	36.0	26	30.2	23	26.7			23	26.7	57	66.3	2	2.3	4	4.7			86		
SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY PATROL (TRI COUNTY AREA)							1	12.5	2	25.0	3	37.5	2	25.0			4	50.0	4	50.0							8		
AREA TOTAL	11	2.3	10	2.1	17	3.5	64	13.2	141	29.0	110	22.6	116	23.9	17	3.5	119	24.5	317	65.2	12	2.5	23	4.7	15	3.1	486		

White 436 or 89.7%
Black 35 or 7.2%

Male 131 or 27.0%
Female 340 or 69.9%

(Unknown 15 or 3.1%)

The race and sex data presented on Table II indicates a preponderance of white runaways, some 89.7% area-wide. Again, some variation exists among the coastal area counties. In Berkeley County, officials apprehended some 172 white runaways who accounted for 97.7% of the county total. White runaways in Charleston County constituted 81.5% of the county total, in Dorchester County, 93%. Only in Charleston County did black youth incorporate more than 10% of the runaways apprehended.

Females constituted nearly 70% of the coastal area runaways. Berkeley County exhibits the highest percentage of females, 76.1. Charleston County, with 65.2%, has the lowest concentration.

The race and sex distribution of coastal South Carolina runaways corresponds well to national patterns. UCR data on runaways arrested in 1976 indicated 87.6% were white, slightly less than the 89.7% reported for coastal South Carolina in the present survey. Females were a definite majority in both the UCR data and the coastal area distribution. However, the concentration appears much higher in coastal South Carolina, 69.9% as opposed to 56.9% nationally.

Residence of Runaways Apprehended

Table III presents the residence data on runaways apprehended in the coastal area during 1977. The great majority, some 84.6%, were reported to be residents of South Carolina. Only 12.3% came from out of state. Residence was unknown in 15 cases, 3.1% of the area total.

The highest concentration of out-of-state runaways occurs in Dorchester County where they account for 17.4% of the county total. Berkeley County has

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TABLE III

RESIDENCE OF RUNAWAYS - 1977
BY COUNTY AND AREA

COUNTY	SOUTH CAROLINA	PERCENTAGE	OUT OF STATE	PERCENTAGE	UNKNOWN	PERCENTAGE	TOTAL
Berkeley	162	92.0	14	8.0	0	0.	176
Charleston	178	82.4	23	10.6	15	6.9	216
Dorchester	71	82.6	15	17.4	0	0.	86
South Carolina Highway Patrol (Tri County Area)	0	0.	8	100.0	0	0.	8
AREA TOTAL	411	84.6	60	12.3	15	3.1	486

the lowest out-of-state concentration incorporating only 8% of the runaways apprehended. The South Carolina Highway Patrol, reflecting the tri-county area, picked up eight non-residents. With nearly 85% of the coastal runaways reported as South Carolina residents, one must conclude that the issue involved is basically local rather than interstate in nature.

Monthly Distribution of Runaway Apprehensions

Table IV presents the monthly distribution of runaway apprehensions by county and area. Month of apprehension was reported in 442 of 486 cases. Although Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester are coastal counties, the area is not a resort center and an apprehension pattern of concentration in the summer months is not reflected.

May appears to be the most common month for runaway apprehensions and the fewest number of runaway cases occurred in July. The data detailed here indicates that apprehensions peak in the late spring, diminish sharply during July and August, increase again in the early fall, then drop off abruptly during November, remaining low until March. Figure 3, a line graph reflecting month of apprehension for 442 runaways in the tri-county area, clearly delineates this pattern of the spring/fall peak periods and the winter/summer declines.

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

TABLE IV

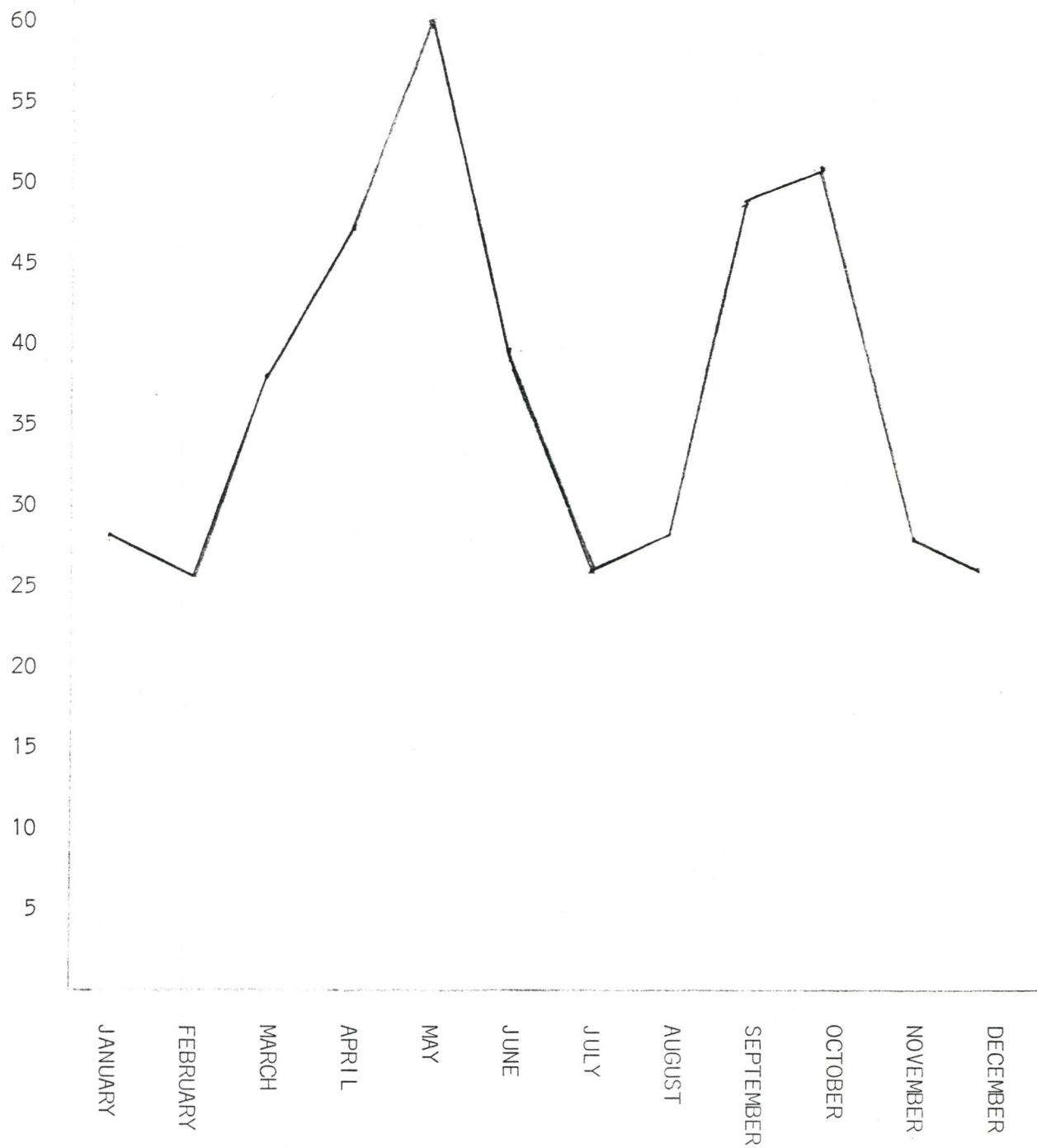
MONTHLY APPREHENSION OF RUNAWAYS
BY COUNTY AND AREA

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>BERKELEY</u>		<u>CHARLESTON</u>		<u>DORCHESTER</u>		<u>SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY PATROL (TRI COUNTY AREA)</u>		<u>AREA TOTAL</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
JANUARY	11	6.3	12	5.6	5	5.8			28	5.8
FEBRUARY	9	5.1	15	6.9	2	2.3			26	5.3
MARCH	15	8.5	15	6.9	8	9.3			38	7.8
APRIL	26	14.8	12	5.6	9	10.5			47	9.7
MAY	26	14.8	26	12.0	8	9.3			60	12.3
JUNE	6	3.4	26	12.0	8	9.3			40	8.2
JULY	12	6.8	7	3.2	4	4.6			23	4.7
AUGUST	10	5.7	15	6.9	3	3.5			28	5.8
SEPTEMBER	23	13.1	17	7.9	6	7.0	2	25.0	48	9.9
OCTOBER	15	8.5	22	10.2	9	10.5	4	50.0	50	10.3
NOVEMBER	11	6.3	9	4.2	6	7.0	2	25.0	28	5.8
DECEMBER	9	5.1	12	5.6	5	5.8			26	5.3
UNKNOWN	3	1.7	28	13.0	13	15.1			44	9.1
TOTAL	176		216		86		8		486	

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

Figure 2

APPREHENSION OF 442 COASTAL AREA RUNAWAYS BY MONTH



Runaway Detention*

Table V presents the data on runaway detention, including number detained, length of stay, range, and average stay by facility, county and area. The Charleston City Police Department was unable to provide detention information. Goose Creek and Mount Pleasant Police Departments indicated they had detained runaways but failed to supply length of stay. The Chief of Police in Folly Beach stated that runaways were never detained in his facility. With these exceptions noted, the detention data may be summarized as follows:

Of the 486 runaways apprehended in the coastal area during 1977, 167, or about one-third were detained in law enforcement facilities for stays ranging from one hour to twenty-one days. More than one-half of the youths detained were released in one day, two-thirds within 48 hours. Nevertheless, a sizable 10.8% remained in lockup for more than four days. The average stay, area wide, based on 153 cases with known times was 55.1 hours or 2.3 days.

Considerable variation in detention practices is evident within and among the three counties. Dorchester, for example, had the greatest percentage of runaways detained, 83.7% of the county total compared with 19% in Charleston County and 30.7% in Berkeley County. Berkeley County produced the greatest percentage of stays exceeding four days, 20.4, had the longest average stay, 3.1 days, and the widest range, 4 hours to 21 days. Dorchester County, although it had the highest percentage of runaways detained, exhibited the shortest average stay, 1.7 days. The average stay in Charleston County was 2.4 days.

*For the purpose of this study detention was defined as lock-up or secure confinement.

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TABLE V

RUNAWAY DETENTION BY FACILITY, COUNTY AND AREA

COUNTY	RUNAWAYS APPREHENDED	RUNAWAYS DETAINED	%	LENGTH OF STAY										%	unk	%	RANGE	AVERAGE STAY*
				1 day or less	%	2 days	%	3 days	%	4 days	%	more than 4 days	%					
<u>BERKELEY</u>																		
County Sheriff	23	23	100.	4	17.4	2	8.7	3	13.0	3	13.0	11	47.8	0	0	1-21 days	123.1 hrs. or 5.1 days	
Moncks Corner Police Dept.	13	13	100.	7	53.8	5	38.5	0	0	1	7.7	0	0	0	0	24-96 hrs.	38.8 hrs. or 1.6 days	
Goose Creek Police Dept.	83	2	2.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100.	0	0	
Hanahan Police Department	57	16	28.1	11	68.8	3	18.8	0	0	2	12.5	0	0	0	0	4-80 hrs.	32.5 hrs. or 1.4 days	
St. Stephens Police	None Detained																	
TOTAL	176	54	30.7	22	40.7	10	18.5	3	5.6	6	11.1	11	20.4	2	3.7	4 hrs.- 21 days	74.2 hrs. or 3.1 days	
<u>CHARLESTON</u>																		
Charleston County Police Dept.	84	29	34.5	17	58.6	4	13.8	3	10.3	2	6.9	3	10.3	0	0	1-14 days	57.9 hrs. or 2.4 days	
Charleston City Police Dept.	15	unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
North Charleston Police Dept.	91	2	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100.0	0	0	
Sullivan's Island Police Dept.	None Detained																	
Folly Beach Police Dept.	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Mt. Pleasant Police Dept.	10	10	100.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	100.	0	0	
TOTAL	216	41	19.0	17	41.5	4	9.8	3	7.3	2	4.9	3	7.3	12	29.3	1-14 days	57.9 hrs. or 2.4 days	

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

TABLE V

RUNAWAY DETENTION BY FACILITY, COUNTY AND AREA

COUNTY	RUNAWAYS APPREHENDED	RUNAWAYS DETAINED	LENGTH OF STAY												RANGE	AVERAGE STAY*	
			%	1 day or less	%	2 days	%	3 days	%	4 days	%	more than 4 days	%	unk			%
<u>DORCHESTER</u> County Sheriff	78	64	82.1	42	65.6	9	14.1	3	4.7	6	9.4	4	6.3	0	0	1-8 days	43.9 hrs. or 1.8 days
St. George Police Dept.	None Detained																
Summerville Police Dept.	8	8	100.	8	100.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1-24 hrs.	10.3 hrs. or .4 days
TOTAL	86	72	83.7	50	69.4	9	12.5	3	4.2	6	8.3	4	5.6	0	0	1 hr. - 8 days	40.1 hrs. or 1.7 days
<u>SOUTH CAROLINA</u> <u>HIGHWAY PATROL</u> (Tri County Area)	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AREA TOTAL	486	167	34.3	89	53.3	23	13.8	9	5.4	14	8.4	18	10.8	14	8.4	1 hr. - 21 days	55.1 hrs. or 2.3 days*

*Average stay is computed only on runaways detained for whom length of stay was given. The average stay area wide is based on 153 runaways; (167 detained less 14 time unknown).

Analysis by facility indicates that Summerville Police Department, in Dorchester County, detained runaways for shorter periods of time than any other agency. All runaways were placed in secure confinement, but they uniformly remained less than 24 hours. The average stay was 10.3 hours. Berkeley County sheriff's office personnel also detained all runaways apprehended. However, in contrast to the Summerville agency, long stays were typical. Some 47.8% of the runaways remained for more than four days. The average stay was five days, and one youth was in lockup for 21 days.

Dispositions of Runaways

Table VI summarizes the data on dispositions of runaways by facility, county and area. Area totals are also presented graphically in Figure 3. It should be noted that dispositions can be multiple. There were a total of 504 dispositions for the 486 runaways apprehended in the coastal area. Charleston City Police Department provided no data on dispositions of the 15 runaways arrested. In a total of 70 cases area-wide, dispositions were unknown.

The great majority of runaways apprehended in the coastal area, some 63.3%, were returned to parents. The percentage was fairly uniform among the three counties. Berkeley authorities returned 61.4% of their runaways to parents, Charleston authorities 64.8%, and Dorchester authorities 68.3%.

Other social agencies were the indicated dispositions in 53 cases, some 10.5% of the area total. Dorchester County dominated this category, listing 21 referrals to social agencies, frequently in conjunction with returning the youths to their parents. South Carolina Highway Patrol officers, who apprehended eight runaways in 1977, made six referrals to social agencies.

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TABLE VI

DISPOSITION(S)* OF RUNAWAYS BY FACILITY, COUNTY AND AREA

COUNTY	FAMILY OR PROBATE COURT		RUNAWAY HOUSE		OTHER SOCIAL AGENCY		RETURN TO PARENTS		UNKNOWN		TOTAL
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
<u>BERKELEY</u>											
Berkeley County											
Sheriff's Office	12	52.2	0	0	0	0	11	47.8	0	0	23
Moncks Corner											
Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	100.0	0	0	13
Goose Creek											
Police Department	1	1.2	0	0	7	8.4	61	73.5	14	16.9	83
Hanahan Police Dept.	1	1.8	0	0	2	3.5	23	40.4	31	54.4	57
St. Stephens Police	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	14	8.0	0	0	9	5.1	108	61.4	45	25.5	176
<u>CHARLESTON</u>											
Charleston County											
Police Department	6	7.0	15	17.2	8	9.1	55	63.2	3	3.4	87
Charleston City											
Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	100.0	15
North Charleston											
Police Department	11	12.1	5	5.5	0	0	74	81.3	1	1.1	91
Sullivan's Island											
Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Folly Beach Police	0	0	0	0	9	56.3	7	43.8	0	0	16
Mt. Pleasant Police	2	20.0	2	20.0	0	0	6	60.0	0	0	10
TOTAL	19	8.7	22	10.0	17	7.8	142	64.8	19	8.7	219

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

TABLE VI

DISPOSITION(S)* OF RUNAWAYS BY FACILITY, COUNTY AND AREA

COUNTY	FAMILY OR PROBATE COURT		RUNAWAY HOUSE		OTHER SOCIAL AGENCY		RETURN TO PARENTS		UNKNOWN		TOTAL
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
<u>DORCHESTER</u>											
Dorchester County											
Sheriff's Office	7	7.5	0	0	18	19.4	64	68.8	4	4.3	93
St. George Police	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Summerville Police	0	0	0	0	3	37.5	5	62.5	0	0	8
TOTAL	7	6.9	0	0	21	20.8	69	68.3	4	4.0	101
<u>SOUTH CAROLINA</u>											
<u>HIGHWAY PATROL</u>											
(Tri County Area)	0	0	0	0	6	75.0	0	0	2	25.0	8
AREA TOTAL	40	7.9	22	4.4	53	10.5	319	63.3	70	13.9	504

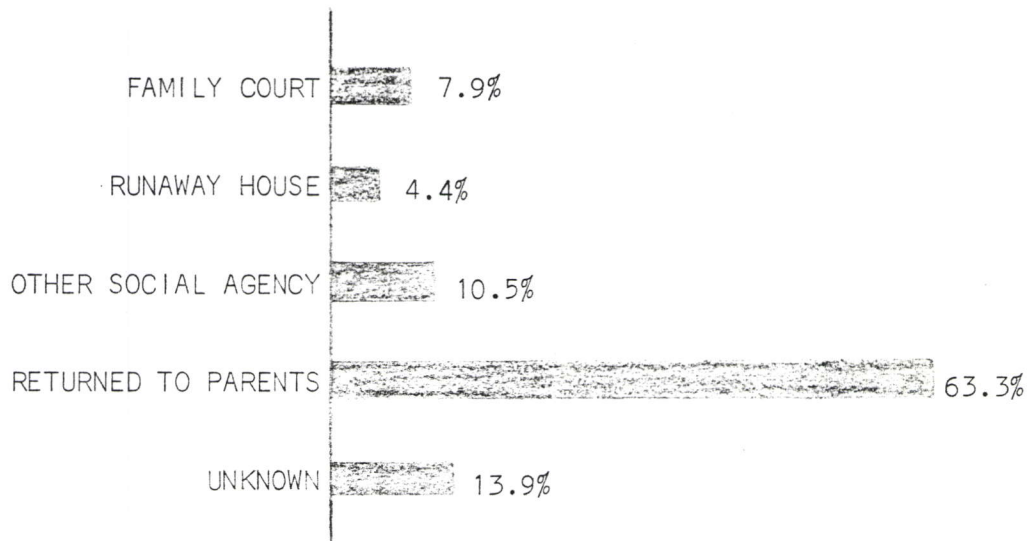
*Dispositions may be multiple for a given child.

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

Figure 3

DISPOSITION OF RUNAWAYS

TOTAL AREA



About 8% of the runaways apprehended in the tri-county area were referred to Family or Probate Court. The frequency of this disposition was fairly uniform among the counties. Court referrals accounted for 8% of the Berkeley County dispositions, 8.7% of the Charleston County dispositions, and 6.9% of the Dorchester County dispositions.

According to the data received from the law enforcement agencies, only Charleston County authorities made referrals to the Charleston Runaway House. Twenty-two runaways, 10% of the Charleston County total or 4.4% of the area total, were placed in the shelter. By facility, Charleston County Police Department accounted for 15 referrals, North Charleston Police Department for 5 referrals, and Mount Pleasant Police Department for 2 referrals.*

Runaways Who Returned Home On Their Own

Data submitted by the Charleston County Police Department included runaways reported as well as those apprehended for a total of 204 in both categories. Eighty-four, or 41.2% of the total, were picked up by Charleston County police and have been analyzed elsewhere in this study. Seven runaways, or 3.4%, were apprehended in other states, including California, Virginia, Texas, Maryland, Mississippi and Florida. Five runaways, or 2.5%, were found

*These figures do not provide an accurate assessment of law enforcement utilization of the Runaway House in Charleston County. The juvenile officer at Charleston City Police Department estimated some 30 referrals to Runaway House in 1977 but stated that most involved children who turned themselves in at the station. A North Charleston police officer indicated that in addition to the 5 youths sent to Runaway House after their apprehension, there were "several informal referrals." The example this officer gave involved a child brought to the station by parents because he would not stay at home.

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

TABLE VII

LENGTH OF TIME AWAY FOR RUNAWAYS WHO RETURNED ON THEIR OWN
BY AGE, RACE AND SEX

DATA SUPPLIED BY CHARLESTON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

TIME	10 & Und.		11		12		13		14		15		16		W/M		W/F		B/M		B/F		TOTAL		CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
1 day or less	4	100.	1	100.	0	0	5	23.8	12	60.0	3	11.5	9	26.5	13	37.1	15	24.6	3	50.0	3	50.0	34	31.5	31.5
2-7 days	0	0	0	0	1	50.0	10	47.6	3	15.0	12	46.1	14	41.2	11	31.4	26	42.6	1	16.7	2	33.3	40	37.0	68.5
8 days to 1 month	0	0	0	0	1	50.0	4	19.0	4	20.0	5	19.2	5	14.71	6	17.1	13	21.3	0	0	0	0	19	17.6	86.1
1 month to 2 months	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4.8	0	0	3	11.5	2	5.9	2	5.7	2	3.3	1	16.7	1	16.7	6	5.5	91.6
2 months to 3 months	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4.8	0	0	0	0	3	8.8	1	2.9	3	4.9	0	0	0	0	4	3.7	95.3
3 months to 4 months	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5.0	1	3.8	1	2.9	1	2.9	1	1.6	1	16.7	0	0	3	2.8	98.1
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7.7	0	0	1	2.9	1	1.6	0	0	0	0	2	1.9	100.0
TOTAL	4	37	1	.92	2	1.9	21	19.4	20	18.5	26	24.1	34	31.5	35	32.4	61	56.5	6	5.6	6	5.6	108	100.0	--

MALE 41 or 38%
 FEMALE 67 or 62%

WHITE 96 or 88.9%
 BLACK 12 or 11.1%

by relatives. The remaining 108 youths, 52.9% of the total, returned home of their own volition after stays ranging from less than one day to four months. The "length of time away" variable as it relates to age, race and sex of runaways, who came home without police or parental intervention, is analyzed on Table VII.

It was noted above that the majority of runaways reported to have come home on their own did so in one week or less, in number 74 or 68.5%. The percentage rises to 86.1 given one month's time. Only thirteen children, 12% of the total number, stayed away more than one month. Long stays were associated with the older runaways, as might be expected--ten of the thirteen were 15-16 years of age. If age categories are combined for comparison, 16.67% of the 15-16 year olds and 7.3% of the 13-14 year olds were gone for more than one month. All runaways under the age of 13 returned home within the one month period. Males were slightly more likely to stay away than females--14.6% of the male subgroup was gone more than one month compared with 10.4% of the female subgroup. Some 25% of the small number of blacks had long stays, as opposed to 10.4% of the white subgroup.

Admissions To Runaway Shelters

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, a Federal Grant under the Runaway Youth Act of 1974 provided funding for the establishment of Runaway Shelters in November, 1975 under the auspices of the South Carolina Department of Youth Services. During the past two years of operation hundreds of youth have been provided temporary care, alleviating the need for emergency placement

elsewhere including jail detention. Information for the following two tables was supplied by the Youth Bureau Division of the South Carolina Department of Youth Services.

Table VIII details the admissions to the Runaway Shelters for calendar year 1977 by the month. The data reflects 299 youths admitted to both shelters for the year with the Charleston Shelter, which is open full time, contributing over 75% of the admissions. While the average caseload at the Charleston Shelter approximated 20 monthly, it should be noted that the heaviest concentration of clients was during September, October and November. The North Myrtle Beach facility, seasonal in operation, reflected an average caseload of 12 for those months open, with the heaviest concentration apparent in June, July and August, as would be expected.

Table IX reveals the sources of referral for the 299 admissions in calendar year 1977. Of the agency referrals, law enforcement agencies contributed almost 31%, Department of Youth Services over 22%, and other social agencies about 9%, indicating that approximately 67% of the total referrals were from agencies. Self-referrals accounted for 32.8% of the total referrals, the majority representing the youth himself. In analyzing each Shelter separately, it is apparent that the Charleston Shelter had a much larger portion of self-referrals (approximately 42% of the Charleston caseload) and a slightly decreased proportion of both law enforcement (25.1%) and Department of Youth Services (18.5%) referrals.

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

TABLE VIII

ADMISSIONS TO RUNAWAY SHELTERS - 1977
BY MONTH

Month	No. Admitted		No. Admitted	Total
	Charleston		North Myrtle Beach	
January	3	(Summerville)	Both Shelters	3
February	3	"	closed these	3
March	8	"	three months	8
April	2		2	4
May	5		8	13
June	14		16	30
July	15		24	39
August	25		15	40
September	38		7	45
October	41		Closed during	41
November	44		these months	44
December	29			29
TOTAL	227		72	299

COASTAL AREA RUNAWAY STUDY - 1977

TABLE IX

ADMISSIONS TO RUNAWAY SHELTERS
BY SOURCE OF REFERRAL

	NORTH			
	CHARLESTON	MYRTLE BEACH		
Source	No. Admitted	No. Admitted	Total	Percentage
<u>Agency Referrals:</u>				
Law Enforcement	57	35	92	30.8
Family Court/Juvenile Detention	9	1	10	3.3
Juvenile Placement & Aftercare	4	0	4	1.3
Dept. of Youth Services	42	25	67	22.4
<u>Other Social Agencies:</u>				
Dept. of Social Services	13	3	16	
Mental Health/Crisis Counseling	5	0	5	
Family Services	1	0	1	
Oak Grove Home	1	0	1	
Helping Hands	0	5	5	
Sub-Total	<u>20</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>9.4</u>
Agency Sub-Total	132	69	201	67.2
<u>Self-Referrals:</u>				
Self	47	3	50	16.7
Neighbor/Friend	31	0	31	10.4
Hotline	15	0	15	5.0
National Runaway Switchboard	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>.7</u>
Sub-Total	95	3	98	32.8
TOTAL	227	72	299	100.0

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study reflects a continuing effort by the Research and Evaluation Unit to maintain current, accurate information on the runaway problem in coastal South Carolina. Personnel affiliated with fourteen law enforcement agencies in Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester counties provided the data on runaway apprehensions, generally including, for each individual case, age, race, sex, residence, month apprehended, length of detention, and disposition(s). Charleston County Police Department also supplied information on runaways reported missing who returned home on their own, and the Columbia Youth Bureau provided admissions data for the coastal area runaway shelters. Key characteristics of the runaway problem in the tri-county area during 1977 may be summarized as follows.

Some 486 runaways were apprehended, the heaviest concentration in Charleston County (44.5% of the area total). Typically the runaway was white, female, and in the 15-16 age grouping. A great majority of the youths apprehended, almost 85%, indicated South Carolina residence. Apprehensions peaked in the late spring and again in the early fall, after a sharp decline during the summer months. Approximately one-third of the coastal area runaways experienced jail detention, the average stay being 2.3 days. Most of the runaways apprehended, some 63.3%, were returned to their parents by law enforcement authorities. About 8% were referred to courts. Only Charleston County law enforcement agencies reported utilization of the Runaway Shelter, making 22 referrals which accounted for about 10% of runaway dispositions in the

county. Admissions figures for the Charleston Shelter indicated some 57 law enforcement referrals in 1977, about 25% of the total, but these apparently included runaways who turned themselves in to the police and other kinds of "informal" referrals, as well as cases in which the runaway was actually apprehended. Finally, of the runaways reported to Charleston County Police Department who returned home on their own, more than two-thirds came back within one week.

It was mentioned in the introduction that this research project has a predecessor, the 1973 Coastal Area Runaway Study. The two studies are difficult to compare because geographic areas do not coincide, and reporting facilities within the two common counties, Berkeley and Charleston, are not identical. Furthermore, the 1973 data for Berkeley County as a whole included only total apprehensions and sexual distribution. With these limitations noted, the following differences seem indicated when the two studies are compared:

- 1) There were fewer apprehensions in the Berkeley and Charleston combined counties, 628 in 1973 as opposed to 392 in 1977, a decrease of 47.6%. A similar decrease of 48.9% occurred in runaway arrests statewide during the 1975-77 period, according to the UCR figures cited in the introduction.

- 2) There was a higher concentration of female runaways in 1977--in Berkeley County females constituted 65% of the runaways apprehended in 1973, 75% in 1977. Similarly in Charleston County, the percentage rose from 54% to 65%.

3) In Charleston County the runaway population was generally younger in 1977. The percentage of thirteen to fourteen year olds increased from 30.5 in 1973 to 39.8 in 1977, while the percentage of 15-16 year olds dropped from 63.3 to 44.

4) In Charleston County, the percentage of out-of-state runaways dropped from 26.3 to 10.6.

5) In Charleston County, there was a pronounced decline in court referrals from law enforcement agencies. Court referrals incorporated nearly 50% of the runaway dispositions in 1973, only 8.7% in 1977.

Although the differences highlighted above must be viewed with some caution, nevertheless, total apprehension data for 1973 and 1977 does seem to indicate that the runaway problem in the coastal area has diminished. UCR arrest figures, both statewide and nationally also lend substance to this thesis.

The 1973-1977 comparison also suggests that the runaway problem has become more of a local issue. Conversations with law enforcement officers in the tri-county area revealed that most of the South Carolina runaways, which comprised 84.6% of the area total, also were residents of the county in which they were apprehended. The heavy concentration of South Carolina residents in the population of runaways, coupled with informal reports that many were picked up in their county of residence, substantiates Brennan's finding, cited in the introduction, that the majority of runaway youth travel less than ten miles from home.

The overall pattern of law enforcement involvement discussed briefly in the introduction merits further attention in light of the 1977 tri-county study. A substantial number of runaways, about one-third of those apprehended,

are experiencing jail detention. Frequently law enforcement personnel handle runaways on their own, with few agency or court referrals, in most cases returning youth to parents perhaps after a period of secure confinement. Counseling of runaways also takes place within the law enforcement structure. A Monck's Corner police officer related that he "just tried to do some preaching," mentioning one case in which he arranged for a teenage runaway to discuss her problem with a thirty year old woman "who had been in a lot of trouble."

Furthermore, law enforcement involvement is not limited to apprehensions; for example, Charleston County Police Department processed 108 reports on runaways who returned on their own, generally within a short period of time. In a phone conversation a Folly Beach police officer indicated fifteen similar cases. Police also handle youth who turn themselves in, counsel parents who bring children with runaway problems to the station, and make "informal" referrals to social agencies. These involvements suggest the need for a separate mechanism to handle initial reports on missing children and implement voluntary referrals to social agencies that originate with runaway children themselves or their families.

The 1977 data, which appears to reflect a diminishing runaway problem, also underscores the necessity of sustained, intensified efforts to transfer responsibility for temporary housing and counseling of runaways outside of the already overburdened law enforcement structure. The present situation in Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties certainly falls short of the national goals outlined in the Runaway Youth Act, which endeavored to establish local programs to alleviate police responsibility for care of wayward children.

Certainly top priority should be given to developing alternative facilities and expanding existing programs to eliminate jail confinement of runaway youth. At the national, state, and local levels all agency personnel dealing with problems in our juvenile population must continue to address the complex issue of meeting the pressing needs of troubled children who run away from home.

Calendar Year 1977

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Coastal area runaway stud

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FACILITY: _____

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*Detention refers to lock-up or secure confinement